Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
June 20, 2008

National Aboriginal Day a Celebration of Culture and Achievement

The Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, today encouraged Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to recognize and take part in activities surrounding National Aboriginal Day, Saturday, June 21.

"National Aboriginal Day provides an opportunity for all Canadians to recognize the contributions of Aboriginal peoples, and here in Newfoundland and Labrador it is important to recognize their ongoing contribution to our unique cultural fabric," said Minister Pottle, who will be taking part in National Aboriginal Day activities at the Labrador Friendship Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. "I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take time on this important day to participate in events related to this celebration, and to reflect on the recent progress we have made in matters concerning Aboriginal justice, self-government and land claims. We also recognize there is still a great deal of work to be done to improve the health and well-being of our Aboriginal peoples."

In 2008, Aboriginal people across Canada still face great challenges. It is reported by Statistics Canada that Aboriginal people experience a lower standard of living than non-Aboriginal people. In fact, Health Canada reported that Aboriginal people have a life expectancy 10 years less than non-Aboriginals. As well, violence continues to be a serious issue in Aboriginal communities.

"Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal leaders have clearly stated they want to work with a government that understands the unique circumstances of their peoples," said Minister Pottle. "On this National Aboriginal Day, I am proud to be a part of a government that takes Aboriginal issues very seriously and is dedicated to the betterment of all Aboriginal peoples. We are achieving this on many fronts, including innovative programs such as our *Violence Prevention Initiative*, the *Poverty Reduction Strategy."*

Budget 2008 saw significant new funding to improve the health and well-being of Newfoundland and Labrador's Aboriginal peoples. These investments include:

- $200,000 under the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* for increased funding to the Air Foodlift Subsidy, bringing the total annual investment to $600,000;
- $200,000 under the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* to expand eligibility for the Northern Allowance to all Income Support clients who maintain a residence in coastal Labrador;
- $100,000 for a Gladue Court in Sheshatshiu, which specializes in the treatment of Aboriginal offenders and operates on the premise that Aboriginal peoples face unique challenges;
- $60,000 to establish an Aboriginal Literacy Development consultant in Labrador to work closely with members of the Aboriginal community to develop culturally relevant literacy and Adult Basic Education programs to address the literacy needs of Aboriginals;
- $50,000 to support Aboriginal athletes' participation in the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG); and,
- the new position of Aboriginal Health Consultant is being created within the Department of Health and Community Services. This position will result in an enhanced focus on aboriginal health issues in partnership with the regional health authorities and aboriginal groups.

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